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ABSTRACT

It was predicted in this study that children would acquire negative racial attitudes more readily than positive racial attitudes, females would acquire racial attitudes more readily than males, and personality traits would correlate with racial attitude scores. Measures of 13 personality traits were obtained from a second grade population. Subjects were randomly assigned to two treatment groups. One group received positive information concerning a family, representing one fictitious population and neutral information concerning another family, representing a second fictitious population. Positive racial attitude scores were obtained by having students make acceptance and rejection choices of children representative of the two populations. The other group received similar treatment except that negative information replaced the positive information. Negative racial attitude scores were obtained. No significant differences were found between groups or between males and females. However, results confirmed the three predictions. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (JM)

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AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE ACQUISITION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RACIAL ATTITUDES

by

Marvin W. Boss

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at the

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ABSTRACT

An Experimental Investigation
of the
Acquisition of Positive and Negative Racial Attitudes

Marvin W. Boss.

The investigator predicted that:

1. Children would acquire negative racial attitudes more readily than positive racial attitudes.
2. Females would acquire racial attitudes more readily than males.
3. Personality traits would correlate with racial attitude scores.

Measure of 13 personality traits were obtained from a second grade population. Subjects were randomly assigned to two treatment groups.

Subjects in Group No. 1 received positive information concerning a family, representing one fictitious population and neutral information concerning another family, representing a second fictitious population. Positive racial attitude scores were obtained by having students make acceptance and rejection choices of children representative of the two populations.

Subjects in Group No. 2 were treated similarly except that negative information replaced the positive information. Negative racial attitude scores were, thus obtained.

No significant differences were found between groups (probability less than .17) or between males and females (probability less than .14). However, differences were as predicted and additive.

Three personality traits correlated significantly with positive racial attitude scores. No personality traits were correlated significantly with negative racial attitude scores.

The study raises questions regarding conclusions of other researchers concerning racial attitude acquisition and correlations of personality traits with racial attitude scores.

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An Experimental Investigation of the Acquisition of Positive and Negative Racial Attitudes

Studies of the development of racial attitudes (prejudices) have for the most part been confined to the measurement of pre-existing negative racial attitudes. Because of ethical and moral considerations, researchers have been reluctant to induce negative racial attitudes toward any existing racial group. Studies have been conducted where attempts were made to induce positive racial attitudes in subjects. However, in these instances it can be assumed that the subjects had, for the most part, held attitudes about the existing group prior to the induced treatment.

Studies of Gough and Edwards (1950) and Photiadis (1962) are indicative of many which have shown a significant relationship between negative racial attitude scores and certain personality traits. Many traits and many different scales for measuring these traits have been used in reporting these relationships. Kutner (1958) concluded that certain personality traits were associated with those subjects who are most prejudiced while personality traits at the opposite end of a continuum were associated with those subjects who were most tolerant.

Taylor (1966) and McCandless and Hoyt (1961), in addition to many other researchers, report that racial attitudes are acquired at a very early age. It would seem that, by the end of the child's third year, racial attitudes have begun to develop, and

tnat by the end of the third or fourth grade, racial attitudes are well established in children.

The lack of experimental studies of the acquisition of racial attitudes and the accompanying personality correlates encouraged the author to study the acquisition of racial attitudes in an experimental setting amongst subjects who could be assumed to have had no pre-existing attitudes. In this situation it was predicted that the subjects, given simular stimuli, would acquire negative racial attitudes to a greater degree than positive racial attitudes. Many researchers in the area of prejudice would seem to support this point of view. Allport (1958) supported this prediction by indicating that "erroneous generalization and hostility are natural and common capacities of the human mind."

The author predicted that certain personality traits would correlate with positive racial attitude scores, while traits at the opposite end of a continuum, would correlate with negative racial attitude scores. Assuming that racial attitudes could be induced in subjects in an experimental setting it would seem important to determine whether or not personality traits did, in fact, correlate with the acquisition of both positive and negative racial attitudes.

A third prediction by the author was that female subjects would more readily acquire racial attitudes than male subjects. Studies by Janis and Field (1959) have shown that females have significantly higher mean scores on persuasability tests than males.

The Early School Personality Questionnaire, developed by the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, was administered to the second grade population of a parochial school in the suburban Washington, D.C., area. This test provides measures on thirteen personality traits. (See Appendix A). A second grade population was selected, since previous studies have indicated that this is an age when racial attitudes are developing.

Thirty-six subjects, eighteen male and eighteen female, were randomly selected and assigned to Treatment Group I. Like numbers were similarly assigned to Treatment Group II.

In order to assume that subjects would have no pre-existing racial attitudes, the researcher created three fictitious populations having blue, green and purple skin color, respectively. Each population was represented by a family portrait and by four male and four female children's portraits. The three fictitious populations were differentiated only by skin color. The skin colors were chosen from among a group of specific colors which were indicative of no known racial groups. This was done by asking a group of graduate students to select from many specimen colors those specific colors which reminded them of no known racial grouping.

Two tape recordings were prepared. (See Appendix B for Stimulus Tape I). The first stimulus tape presented positive stimuli regarding one family from a fictitious population followed by neutral stimuli regarding a family from a second fictitious population. Stimulus Tape II presented negative stimuli regarding

a family from one fictitious population and neutral stimuli regarding a family from a second fictitious population.

The subjects in Treatment Group No. 1 listened to Stimulus Tape No. 1 as they viewed family portraits representing two fictitious populations. Thus, a subject would have heard positive stimuli regarding one of the families and neutral stimuli regarding a second family. The subject was then taken to another testing room and under the direction of a research assistant was administered a criterion test (see Appendix C). In this criterion test the subject viewed children's portraits which represented each of the two fictitious populations about which he had previously received stimuli. The subjects were then asked to make twenty acceptance or rejection choices from among the children's portraits which were placed in front of the subject. This test was used to determine whether the subject would generalize to a population the information which he had received relating to a specific family. From this criterion test, a score was then determined which served as a measure of the acquisition of a positive racial attitude.

Subjects in Treatment Group No. II were subjected to the same procedure except that Stimulus Tape No. II was administered to them. This meant that the subjects in Treatment Group No. II heard negative stimuli regarding a family from one fictitious population and neutral stimuli regarding a family from a second fictitious population. The criterion test was then administered to subjects in Treatment Group No. II and a negative racial attitude

score was thus obtained. The scores were adjusted in such a manner so that the negative racial attitude scores from Treatment Group No. II were directly comparable to the positive racial attitude scores from those subjects in Treatment Group No. I.

A pilot study was conducted with second grade students from a similar school and community background. Results of this work and of teacher interviews with each of the subjects who participated in the pilot study supported the fact that racial attitudes were being acquired by the young people and that these were being measured through use of the criterion test.

In the actual study one sample t-tests showed that subjects in each treatment group acquired racial attitudes at a significant level. A two by two by three factorial analysis of variance was then used on the data. Treatment group, sex and color preference were the three factors included. Color preference was included so as to eliminate any effects that preference for a particular color might have. No significant differences were found between treatment groups (probability of less than .17) or between males and females (probability of less than .14). However, in each case the differences were in the predicted direction and were additive.

Zero order correlation coefficients were computed for each treatment group to determine the relationship of personality traits to racial attitude scores. No significant correlation coefficients were found when examining the relationship between personality

traits and negative racial attitude scores. This finding seems most surprising in light of the number of studies which have previously reported such relationships. Three of the personality traits, expedient-conscientious (.381), forthright-shrewd (-.407) and relaxed-tense (-.410), correlated significantly with positive racial attitude scores.

The zero order correlations for the two treatment groups were then compared. In only one instance were the correlation coefficients for the two groups found to be significantly different. This was in the case of comparing the correlations of the expedient-conscientious trait and racial attitude scores. The author is aware that the significant correlations that were found may be accounted for by Type I error.

Multiple correlation coefficients, using all personality traits as predictors of racial attitude scores, were non-significant. However, the step-wise regression analysis would suggest the possible use of certain sub-sets of the personality traits as predictors of positive racial attitude scores.

The results of this study raise questions regarding the generally accepted cause and effect relationship between personality traits and negative racial attitude scores. The author does recognize that there are limitations to this particular study. These limitations include:

1. Were racial attitudes, in fact, being measured?
2. Did the particular instrument used in measuring personality traits account for the lack of significant correlations?

3. If racial attitudes were in fact measured, would they correspond more closely to conforming prejudice or to a functional prejudice? Allport (1962) suggests that functional prejudice satisfies the personal needs of the individual, while conforming prejudice may be the result of accepting the social pattern of the culture.

The results of this study suggest the need for further exploration of the acquisition of racial attitudes and their personality correlates. It would seem most important that additional experimental studies be conducted if questions regarding the casual relationship between personality traits and racial attitude scores are to be answered. In addition, further studies might also be helpful in clarifying the relationship between acquisition of positive and of negative racial attitudes.

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APPENDIX A

Personality Scales of the ESPQ

Factor	Low Score	High Score
A	Reserved	Outgoing
B	Less Intelligent (Concrete Thinking)	More Intelligent (Abstract Thinking)
C	Affected by Feelings	Emotionally Stable
D	Phlegmatic	Excitable
E	Obedient	Assertive
F	Sober	Happy-Go-Lucky
G	Expedient	Conscientious
H	Shy	Venturesome
I	Tough-Minded	Tender-Minded
J	Vigorous	Doubting
N	Forthright	Shrewd
O	Placid	Apprehensive
Q4	Relaxed	Tense

APPENDIX B

Script - Stimulus Tape I

The first part of Stimulus Tape I and Stimulus Tape II is identical. This will be reported below followed by the script that is specific to Stimulus Tape I.

Script Common to Stimulus Tape I and Stimulus Tape II

Hello, I'd like to tell you about some very interesting people. We're going to talk about two families who came from an island many, many miles away. The island on which these families lived is divided into two parts and each of these families lived in one of these parts. Since we're going to be talking about each of these families let's ask Mr. Boss to show you pictures of them. First, let's look at a picture of the Cals. The Cals came from the part of the island that is called Calland. Next, let's look at the Mels. The Mels came from the part of the island that is called Melland.

I was lucky enough to meet these two families just a short time ago. I didn't have my camera with me so I couldn't take photographs, but I did the next best thing, that was, to draw pictures of the families, because I thought you'd want to know what they looked like.

Now, Mr. Boss will show you these families again.

There are the Cals.....

and the Mels.....

All right? What do you think of them? You know they look a lot like us, don't they, except perhaps for the color of their skin. They also look a lot like each other, don't they, except, again, for the color of their skin?

Not having been to the island, I can't tell you about all of the people who live in Calland and Melland, but I can tell you about these two families. They both live on a street in a town not too far from here. Actually, the street is very much like the street on which you live.

Script - Stimulus Tape I - Positive-Neutral

Let me tell you about the Cals. Mr. Boss will point them out, as I tell you about them. There's Mr. and Mrs. Cal.... their daughter, Susan .... and their son, John.

As I walked up to their house, I noticed how clean the paint looked and how the windows glistened in the sun. The yard was so neat and clean, too. It looked as if it had just been raked.

The inside of the house was just as neat and clean as the outside. I thought, "How hard Mr. and Mrs. Cal must work to keep their house looking bright and shiny".

John and Susan had not returned from school yet, but it was not long before they came bounding in.

The first thing they wanted to know was, "Had Daddy taken the pocketbook with the money to the lady who had lost it?" I was told that this was a pocketbook that Susan and John had found as they were walking along the street the day before and they wanted so much for the person who had lost it to get it back, especially

as it had a great deal of money in it.

John then told us about a new boy, who had come to his class that very morning for the first time, and how shy he had been. John had smiled at the new boy and asked if he would play with him and sit beside him at lunch.

Susan was very excited too. She was very anxious to tell about a new friend, who also started to school that day, and how she had been friendly towards the new girl as she looked very shy and lost.

As I sat back and looked at the family, I thought "My Goodness, they all work very hard and are very clean. They are honest too, because of the pocketbook and money they were so anxious to return to the person who had lost it. And they were very kind, because of their kindness towards the two new children at school."

"Yes", I thought, "This was a very nice, happy and comfortable home to live in".

Now, I'd like to tell you about the Mels. Mr. Boss, once again, will point them out to you. There's Mr. and Mrs. Mel..... their daughter, Marie.....and their son, James.

Well, I arrived at the Mels just as Marie and James were coming home from school. They were both so anxious to tell us about the different happenings of the day.

Mrs. Mel managed to quiet them both down so that she could understand what they were saying. Marie spoke first.

Well, she told about the new girl at school and how kind Susan Cal had been to the new girl. She also told how one of the

other girls had tried to get a group of the other girls to poke fun at the new girl.

James then told us that one of the boys had beaten up one of the small first graders during the lunch hour. James also told us how John Cal had been so friendly to the new boy in his class.

I hadn't been there very long when the doorbell rang and it was one of the neighbors who had promised to take Mrs. Mel and the children shopping. It seemed that Mr. Mel was not going to be home until late and Mrs. Mel needed to buy some things for the evening meal. So, I said, "Goodby", as I didn't want to detain them. Since we didn't really get acquainted, I told them I would stop agai some day soon.

Now, you've met these two families, the Cals and the Mels.

You remember that the Cals were kind and clean and hard working and honest. We really didn't get to know the Mels, did we, as they had to leave before I had a chance to talk much to them.

I hope that you've enjoyed hearing about these two families.

APPENDIX C

CRITERION TEST

Questions to be Asked of Subjects, by Confederate

1. Let's suppose that you are going to school with these children. Show me the one whom you would like to have sit beside you.

2. Both of these children (C points to one of each color, both frowning) would like to play with the same car (doll, if girl subject). Which one do you think hits the other?

3. Show me the child who is the kindest?

4. Let's say you are going to have a club. Which child would you like to have join the club?

5. Which child would be most apt to tell lies?

6. Which child do you think would be late in getting his (her) school work done?

7. These two children (C points to one of each color, both pokerfaced) were asked by the teacher to sweep the room. Which do you think swept the room?

8. Which child is the most honest?

9. Show me a child, whom you think your mother would like?

10. Which child is the laziest?

11. These two children were playing with a balloon (C points to one of each color, both crying). One of the children becomes angry and breaks the balloon. Who did it?

12. Which child works the hardest?

13. You children decorated your classroom for St. Patrick's Day. One of the children tore the decorations down and threw them away. Which one was it?

14. These two children were at the store when your mother was shopping (C points to one of each color, both pokerfaced). She had too many packages and couldn't carry them all. Which of these two children do you think helped her carry her packages?

15. Which child is the dirtiest?

16. As you know children of this age shouldn't be playing with matches. One of these children was playing with matches and a building caught on fire. Which do you think it was?

17. One of these two children (C points to one of each color, both frowning) has been stealing pencils from other children in your class. Which do you think it was?

18. Which child is the cleanest?

19. Which of these two children (C points to one of each color, both pokerfaced) would you rather have live next door to you?

20. Which child is the meanest?

One half of the questions are written so that the behavior described is positive. These questions are numbers 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 18, 19. The other half of the questions are written so that the behavior described is negative. These questions are numbers 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20.

S will have four portraits of each of the populations from which to choose in answering these questions. A score will be assigned for

each population on the following basis.

1. When S selects a member of a population as the appropriate response for a question in which the behavior is positive, then that population will be assigned one point.
2. When S selects a member of a population as the appropriate response for a question in which the behavior is negative then the population, not selected, will be assigned one point.